

Application No. 09/890,804

Art Unit 1731

February 23, 2004

Reply to Office Action of October 22, 2003

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the present application.

Listing of Claims:

1. (**Currently Amended**) A process for the dimensionally-true sintering of ceramic pre-shaped items, said process comprising:

resting a firing material during the sintering on ~~supports~~ movable supports not coated with metal or consisting of metal molten at the sinter temperature, which adapt independently to the shrinkage dimensions which occur during the firing ~~process~~, process; and

the movable supports comprise any material which is inert vis-à-vis the firing process and does not result in adhesion to the firing material and does not contaminate the the firing material.

~~wherein the supports are not rollable supports.~~

2. (**Currently Amended**) ~~Process~~ The process according to claim 1, wherein the pre-shaped items ~~being~~ are ceramic dental prostheses.

3. (**Canceled**)

4. (**Currently Amended**) ~~Process~~ The process according to claim 3, 1, wherein the supporting materials ~~being~~ are developed as vertically

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standing or horizontally lying hollow or solid rods and having a cross-section which allows a minimal contact surface with the firing material.

5. (**Currently Amended**) ~~Process~~ The process according to claim ~~3~~, 1, wherein the supporting materials ~~having~~ have a tip which allows a minimal contact surface with the firing material, and being hollow or solid.

6-9. (**Canceled**)

10. (**Currently Amended**) ~~Process~~ The process according to claim 1 or 2, wherein the firing material ~~resting~~ rests on supports which has very different physical properties to the firing material itself, wherein there is no contamination or bonding of the firing material with the supports.

11-20. (**Canceled**)

21. (**New**) The process according to claim 1, wherein said movable supports contact the firing material in pre-shaped form at a contacting portion and support said firing material during sintering thereof in order to form the ceramic pre-shaped item;

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said movable supports are operatively connected to a support structure not contacting the firing material;

and the moveable supports adapt independently to the changing dimensions of the firing material during sintering by moving with respect to the support structure without substantial movement with respect to said contacting portion of the firing material.

22. **(New)** The process according to claim 21, wherein the moveable supports are suspended hooks which support the firing material and the ceramic pre-shaped item during the sintering and said suspended hooks move towards or away from each other as the firing material changes dimensions.

23. **(New)** The method according claim 21, wherein the moveable supports are suspending hooks which move toward or away from each other during sintering of the firing material or ceramic pre-shaped material, wherein the hooks are operatively connected to rollers moveable on a track of the support structure.

24. **(New)** The method according claim 21, wherein the moveable supports are S-shaped suspended hooks which support the firing material and ceramic pre-shaped item during the sintering and which move towards

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or away from each other as the firing material or ceramic pre-shaped item changes dimensions.

25. **(New)** The method according claim 23, wherein the movable supports are operatively connected to said rollers so as to be protected by a heat insulator, and wherein said rollers are operatively connected to a mechanical, electronic and/or optical scanning device having sliding bearings which provide for force equalization during sintering.